

WEST VALLEY MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN

NEW RIVER AND LOWER AGUA FRIA RIVER

Vision Statement

The New River and Lower Agua Fria River Corridor represents a unique riparian ecosystem that is reflective of the Sonoran Desert Region of southern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico. This desert riparian system is a valuable geographic feature known for its native plants and animal habitats, cultural and historic resources, and visual qualities. Through the efforts of many individuals and West Valley communities, the future Corridor will include a 42-mile shared-use non-motorized system of trails along the New River & Lower Agua Fria River. The trail system will link the community of New River and the cities of Avondale, Glendale, Peoria and Phoenix, following the New River southwest to the confluence of the Agua Fria River and the Gila River. When completed, the Corridor will be symbolic of humankind's respect for the Corridor by conserving its natural resources and integrating an efficient system of shared-use trails for all users.

The Vision for the New River and Lower Agua Fria Corridor shared-use trail will:

- Incorporate a regional system of trails designed to enhance the quality of life for all residents in the West Valley.
- Provide a continuous interconnected system of trails for the purpose of encouraging alternative modes of transportation and recreational opportunities.
- Respond to the natural river system, the flood control functions of the River, and the needs of the community.
- Establish a precedent to conserve the natural renewable resources along the West Valley Rivers Corridor.
- Provide educational and interpretive opportunities for the public on sensitive cultural resources, and plant and wildlife habitats that are unique to Sonoran Desert riparian areas.
- Conserve the valuable riparian resources from adverse effects caused by rapid urban development in the West Valley.
- Enhance the visual appeal of the West Valley Rivers Corridor through a unified design that complements its natural elements.

New River and Lower Agua Fria River Corridor

Project Goals & Objectives

Goal #1 The New River and Lower Agua Fria River Corridor shall provide a shared-use, non-motorized urban trail to accommodate a wide range of user groups within the Corridor.

Objectives:

- The Corridor design shall provide opportunities for all users by adhering to current trail design standards.
- The planning and design of the Corridor shall seek input from a range of user groups to insure that the trail accommodates non-motorized transportation users and as many recreational users as possible.
- The Corridor design process shall draw upon existing policies and goals previously established by communities along the Corridor to insure that the project is consistent with each community's goals and objectives.

Goal #2 The New River and Lower Agua Fria River Corridor shall provide a continuous, comfortable, efficient, uninterrupted trail system for non-motorized modes of transportation, and link destinations to the people who utilize them.

Objectives:

- The Corridor planning and design shall identify major origin and destinations within the Corridor area and determine appropriate alternative alignments to insure that linkages are provided.
- The Corridor planning and design will respond to existing and future transportation linkages, including connections to existing and future park-and-ride facilities, public transit service, local neighborhood pedestrian trails, and other multi-modal circulation systems.
- The Corridor project will identify a protected easement for the purpose of establishing public trail access, conserving open space and visual qualities, and protecting environmental and cultural resources along the Corridor.

Goal #3 The New River and Lower Agua Fria River trail system shall enhance access and mobility for all non-motorized, multi-modal transportation users.

Objectives:

- The shared-use path design shall be established by developing a hierarchy of trail design types to respond to multiple uses, landscape character zones and community needs.
- The continuous trail system shall provide a primary and secondary shared-use trail. The primary system shall respond to the urban character zones and include a minimum 10-foot wide hard surface facility; the secondary trails shall respond to the rural character zones and may be hard packed decomposed granite or other suitable materials.
- The Corridor trail system shall, wherever feasible, include grade-separated intersections at major roadway crossings or other physical barriers along the Corridor.
- The Corridor trail design shall incorporate safe design principles outlined in federal design standards, current American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Design Guidelines for Bicycle Facilities, and current recognized design standards for equestrian needs.
- The Corridor shall be designed to accommodate all users by incorporating the recognized Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) design standards.

Goal #4 The New River and Lower Agua Fria River Corridor shall exhibit a unique identity and celebrate the West Valley Rivers Corridor, individual communities along the Corridor, and the natural resources and landscape character within the Corridor.

Objectives:

- The Corridor project shall include a public outreach campaign that explores a range of creative measures to solicit input from each community along the Corridor.
- The Corridor shall have a trail system graphic logo and trail signage element that responds to the individual communities, Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), the Flood Control District of Maricopa County (FCDMC), and the natural and cultural features along the Corridor.
- The Corridor design shall demonstrate a respect for the natural riparian elements of the River Corridor by incorporating water conservation measures, protecting and enhancing habitat, and establishing an environmental education and interpretive element.
- The Corridor shall integrate non-structural flood control measures to protect the existing landscape character.

Goal #5 The New River and Lower Agua Fria River Corridor shall protect natural and cultural resources within the Corridor from the adverse effects of rapid urban development in the West Valley.

Objectives:

- Individual communities and agencies along the Corridor are encouraged to adopt development review standards and design guidelines as tools to preserve urban trail corridor access and right-of-way easements required for the construction of a continuous trail along the Corridor.
- Ensure effective, ongoing dialogue between the various communities along the Corridor to move toward implementation of the New River and Agua Fria River Corridor project.
- Standards on setbacks, pedestrian access, site development orientation, and appropriate land uses for the New River and Agua Fria River Corridor shall be recommended to each jurisdiction along the Corridor.

Plan Development & Corridor Implementation Strategies

- Community support for the overall West Valley Rivers project is critical and will ensure the development and implementation of a well-planned New River and Lower Agua Fria River Corridor.
- Sufficient guidance will be necessary for property owners, area planning organizations, developers and MAG member agencies to incorporate the Master Plan recommendations into planning activities for the West Valley.
- Specific Corridor alignment and landscape character zones will be identified and agreed upon in principle by the Agency Oversight Committee and the interest groups affected by the Master Plan.
- Specific amenity features, multi-modal transportation and land use activity zones will be defined for the Corridor and agreed upon by the Agency Oversight Committee.
- The existing and planned multi-modal transportation linkages identified in connection to the Corridor will include bicycle, pedestrian, equestrian, public transit linkages and park-and-ride facilities.
- A series of sketches will be completed to illustrate the common features and activities of various segments of the Corridor to MAG member agencies, neighborhood groups, planning, landscape architectural, developmental and engineering communities, unaffiliated public, and elected officials throughout the region.
- The magnitude of estimated construction costs for developing each segment of the Corridor will be defined including the proposed amenities provided within the Corridor.
- Priorities for constructing various portions of the Corridor will be established and translated into an Action Plan for the Corridor.
- A first phase priority project segment will be determined to demonstrate the design concepts illustrated in the overall Master Plan.